

THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Nutrition – A Critical Service

Millions of older adults are malnourished. Adequate nutrition is essential for healthy aging and the prevention or delay of chronic disease and disease-related disabilities. Congregate nutrition services improve participants' health and prevent more costly interventions. Home-delivered nutrition services enable older adults to avoid or delay costly institutionalization and allow them to stay in their homes and communities. The need for adequate food and nutrition services by millions of at-risk older adults currently exceeds the resources of the existing programs. These programs are the foundation services of home and community-based care for older adults and their families.

Nutrition Services – Important Support for Families in Need

American families need help. It's that simple. The nutritious meals and social interaction provided by the Administration on Aging's (AoA) nutrition programs help families each and every day as these examples show:

- A 71-year-old American Indian woman who has difficulty walking reports that she couldn't continue to care for her 81-year-old husband in their home if it wasn't for the meals. (Colorado)
- An 80-year-old man who uses a walker, never learned to cook, and has multiple medical problems says that the nutritious, well balanced meals help keep him out of a nursing home. (Wisconsin)
- An adult daughter who provides long distance caregiving for her 91-year-old mother who lives alone and has poor eyesight is thankful that her mother can be picked up to attend the senior center to receive a nutritious meal, and visit with her neighbors. It relieves her mind to know that someone checks on her daily. (South Dakota)

The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs

- AoA's Nutrition Programs provide congregate and home-delivered meals, link older adults to supportive services, decrease social isolation, and provide nutrition education and counseling to help decrease or manage chronic health conditions. Participants have higher nutrient intakes and more social contacts than people who do not participate.
- Five of the top six chronic health conditions may be prevented, delayed or managed through improved nutrition services.
- About fifty percent of older adults in hospitals and nursing homes are malnourished and may be discharged malnourished back into the community.
- About 40% of home-delivered meal programs have waiting lists for service.
- The OAA Nutrition Programs provide 5 meals a week—most adults eat 21 meals a week.
- The cost of a one-year supply of home-delivered meals equals about the cost of one day in the hospital.